

# International Choral Festival brings 18 choirs to Missoula

Missoula's ninth International Choral Festival, July 17-20, features 18 world-class choirs who will perform up to 25 public concerts over four days. Since 1987 the triennial festival has brought 5,500 singers from 43 countries to Missoula.

Choirs participating in the July event represent the countries of Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, Germany, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan and Zimbabwe, along with the states of California, Kansas and New Jersey.

"This year's festival has been no exception to the challenges typically faced, both by choirs and festival organizers, given the unpredictable world economy over the last few years and visa issues," says Executive Director Melissa Blunt.

According to the director, choirs had to cancel when they realized that they couldn't afford airfare to the U.S. Visa problems bedeviled members of the Estonian choir, who discovered they had to apply for an expensive tourist visa, and the choir from the Congo was not able to secure necessary funding or



The Meng Girls Choir from China performs at the International Choral Festival.

U.S. visas before departing their country on a month-long European tour.

"It is heart-breaking when a choir must withdraw after being invited over two years ago, but these types of last-minute glitches are expected," says Blunt. "We purposely over-invite choirs for this reason."

Although a few more surprises may lie ahead, "we currently have an outstanding lineup of 18 world-class choirs who have worked very hard to come to Missoula to share their music and culture with us," Blunt says. "They are all very excited to experience Missoula's festival."

The festival kicks off with free preview concerts on Wednesday, July 17, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Caras Park during Out to Lunch; 2:30 p.m. at Southgate Mall; and 7 p.m. at Bonner Park. Performances continue at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday at five downtown venues. The finale, a Massed Choir Concert, is 7 p.m. Saturday, July 20, at UM's Adams Center – thanks to the addition of powerful new fans and an exhaust system that should make the venue

"more comfortable than in the past," says Blunt.

The non-competitive festival was first presented in 1987 – the brainchild of UM music professor Donald Carey and the Missoula Mendelssohn Club – and has since become known throughout the world for its artistic excellence and hospitality.

A concert admission button costs \$10 before July 17, or \$15 from July 17-20; children 12 and younger are free with a paying adult.

The schedule will be posted on the website, [www.choralfestival.org](http://www.choralfestival.org), and the festival's new mobile "Guidebook" in July.

## NEA awards Art Works grants to Montana organizations

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) recently awarded \$26.3 million in grants to nonprofit national, regional, state, and local organizations nationwide, including seven in Montana.

Art Works grants, awarded to exemplary projects in 13 artistic disciplines and fields, support the:

- Creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence;
- Public engagement with diverse and excellent art;
- Lifelong learning in the arts; and
- Enhancing the livability of communities through the arts.

Montana recipients include:

- **YMCA Writer's Voice in Billings:** \$10,000 to support Women Writing the West, a series of free public readings in Billings and rural Montana by regional women authors.
- **Helena Presents:** \$25,000 to support

multidisciplinary residencies and performances, as well as the Big Sky Alive music festival. Performances and residencies will include ETHEL and Robert Mirabal, CIRCA, Tere O'Connor Dance, Aaron Landsman, Morgan Thorson Dance, Northwest Dance Theater, and Philip Aaberg.

- **International Choral Festival in Missoula:** \$10,000 for the festival, held every three to four years since its inception in 1987. Choirs from 18 countries have been invited to participate in this year's event.

- **Mainstreet Uptown Butte:** \$15,000 Butte to support artists' fees for the First People's Gathering at the Montana Folk Festival. The gathering will present displays and demonstrations of Native arts and crafts by traditional and contemporary Native artists from across the state.

- **Missoula Children's Theatre:** \$35,000 for MCT's national performing arts residency

tour to underserved communities and U.S. military bases. Touring actors and directors will cast local youth in original musicals and rehearse and perform them within a one-week timeframe.

- **Humanities Montana in Missoula:** \$12,500 for the Montana Festival of the Book. This free, three-day festival will include school visits by children's authors, a multi-episode public radio show to air across the state, a calendar of events inserted in the daily newspaper and distributed to 35,000 homes, and live podcasting and blogging.

- **Montana State University in Bozeman:** \$10,000 for Montana Shakespeare in the Parks summer tour. As many as two professional theater productions will be performed in communities throughout Montana, northern Wyoming, eastern Idaho, and western North Dakota, with a special focus on rural, underserved areas.



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## On the road again with Shakespeare in the Parks

Montana Shakespeare in the Parks launches its 41st season of providing free professional theatre productions of the classics throughout Montana and four neighboring states in late June.

This year's selections are Shakespeare's "Henry V" and George Farquhar's "The Recruiting Officer." The summer season, which began June 19 with eight performances in Bozeman, hits the road on July 1 and will include 75 performances in 60 communities prior to its conclusion on Sept. 9.

Artistic Director Joel Jahnke, who has been with the company since 1977, directs one of Shakespeare's most popular history plays, "Henry V." In the opening speech, Shakespeare suggests to the audience, "On your imaginary forces work," since the obvious limitations of the stage could never adequately depict all the elements of this historic story.

Associate Artistic Director William Brown directs "The Recruiting Officer," which is being produced by MSIP for the first time. Elegant costumes, beautiful scenery, and original music by award-winning composer Andrew Hansen complement this hilarious restoration comedy.

For a complete tour schedule visit the company's website at [shakespeareintheparks.org](http://shakespeareintheparks.org).

## SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL ROUNDUP

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**Downpour Music Festival** – Aug. 16-18 at Montana ExpoPark in Great Falls; free festival features cutting-edge Christian entertainers and interdenominational ministry (406-750-1461).

**RootsFest** – Aug. 23 at Forde Nursery in Great Falls; Chuck Prophet, a triple threat as a songwriter, lead guitarist and charismatic frontman, performs with his band, the Mission Express. Jeanne Jolly from Raleigh, N.C., also headlines this year's show (406-868-0997 or [www.rootboyproductions.com](http://www.rootboyproductions.com)).

### Helena area

**Red Ants Pants Music Festival** – July 25-28 at the Jackson Ranch in White Sulphur Springs; Merle Haggard, Robert Earl Keen, Donna the Buffalo, Greg Brown, the Wailin' Jennys, and the Heartless Bastards are among the headliners at the third annual outdoor festival. The roster of more than two-dozen artists also includes Corb Lund, Todd Snider, Amy Helm, Ben Bullington, Joy Kills Sorrow, Martha Scanlan, Deep Dark Woods, and more. Food, beverage, art and crafts vendors, contests, and ag demonstrations are also part of the popular event, which benefits the Red Ants Pants Foundation (406-209-8135 or [www.redantspantsmusicfestival.com](http://www.redantspantsmusicfestival.com)).

**Boulder Music and Arts Festival** – Sept. 7-8 at Veteran's Park in Boulder; sixth annual event features local and regional musicians, artists and authors, and children's activities (406-431-0190 or [www.bouldermtchamber.com](http://www.bouldermtchamber.com)).

### Missoula & Western Montana

**Hot Springs Blues Festival** – July 12-13 at the Symes Hotel in Hot Springs; soak up some blues, courtesy of John Kelley, Kevin VanDort, Brother Music, Mudslide Charley, Mike Bader Bearjam, and the Kenny James Miller Band (406-741-2361).

**International Choral Festival** – July 17-20 in Missoula; 18 choirs from around the world intersperse ancient, traditional and modern music in this event, which kicks off with a

concert at Caras Park, 11 a.m. July 17, followed by a 2:30 p.m. choral showcase in Southgate Mall, and the Festival Youth Choirs, 7 p.m. at Bonner Park. "Concerts of the Choirs" will be held at 2 and 7:30 p.m. July 18 and 19 at various venues around town, and the final massed choir concert is 7 p.m. July 20 at the Adams Center (406-721-7985 or [www.choralfestival.org](http://www.choralfestival.org)).

**Montana Baroque Music Festival** – July 23-25 at Quinn's Hot Springs Resort near Paradise; founder Monica Huggett and eight accomplished musicians celebrate the festivals 10th anniversary with a selection of "Monica's Favorites," Tuesday; and "The Four Seasons, Part I and II," on Wednesday and Thursday (406-826-3150 or [www.montanabaroquefestival.org](http://www.montanabaroquefestival.org)).

**Farmageddon Records Music Festival** – July 25-28 at Rock Creek Lodge near Clinton; three-day outdoor festival celebrates contemporary American roots music by showcasing the emerging and established artists of Farmageddon Records. This year's headliners are Pentagram, Weedeater, Scott H. Biram, Shooter Jennings and Slim Cessna's Auto Club (406-825-4868 or [www.farmageddonrecordsmusicfestival.com](http://www.farmageddonrecordsmusicfestival.com)).

**Celtic Festival Missoula** – July 26-27 in Caras Park; celebration of Celtic culture includes music by the Celtic Dragon Pipe Band, The Gothard Sisters, The Langers Ball, Screaming Orphans, Malarkey and The Fighting Jamesons. Celtic treats, Highlander beer and a Kids' Zone are also on tap, as well as road bowling and a hurling clinic (406-239-0105 or [celticfestivalmissoula.com](http://celticfestivalmissoula.com)).

**Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival** – July 26-28 at the Thomas Ranch near Hamilton; 10 bands take the stage, including several pioneers in bluegrass from around the Northwest, plus a special performance by Kids in Bluegrass. Out-of-state bands Red Desert Ramblers, Tradition, J.D. Webb and the Downstate Ramblers, and Will Williams and Gravel Road join Montana bands Pinegrass, Blue to the Bone, Spring Thaw, Gravely Mountain, the Darby Sirens, Pinegrass, and festival hosts Mike and Tari Conroy (406-821-3777 or [hardtimesbluegrass.com](http://hardtimesbluegrass.com)).



Montana Baroque Music Festival: Founder Monica Huggett (left)

**Big Sky Rhythm and Blues Music Festival** – Aug. 3-4 on the Clark Fork River in Noxon; 10 bands fuel this annual festival, including the Blues Cousins from Moscow, Russia, Junkyard Jane, Dave Raitt and the Baja Boogie Blues Band, the Randy Oxford Band, the Rafael Tranquilino Band, Coyote Kings with Mush Morgan, Michelle Taylor and the Blues Junkies, and Stagecoach Nettie and the Wolf Tones. The Naughty Pine Saloon hosts a pre-festival party on Friday with R.J. Knapp and Honey Robin; and Randy Oxford presides over Sunday evening's Big Sky Blues Jam (406-827-4210 or [bigskyblues.com](http://bigskyblues.com)).

**River City Roots Festival** – Aug. 24-25 in downtown Missoula; loads of free music by local and national artists, a juried art show, Family Fun Festival and a four-mile run are part of this event. Headlining Saturday's show are the Dead Winter Carpenters, Goose Creek Symphony and Railroad Earth. Local favorites The Whizpops and Lil' Smokies also perform. Western Union Swing Band opens Sunday's show, followed by prolific recording artist Chuck Prophet and The Mission Express, and The Gourds, a Texas-based alt-country band that's making its third appearance at the Roots Fest (406-543-4238 or [www.rivercityrootsfestival.com](http://www.rivercityrootsfestival.com)).

**Bitterroot Scottish-Irish Festival** – Aug. 25-26 at the Daly Mansion in Hamilton; entertainment includes bagpipe bands, The Bisceglia Family and the Nine Pints Coggies (406-274-8886 or [www.bitterrootscottishirishfestival.com](http://www.bitterrootscottishirishfestival.com)).